



## Embassy of the United States of America

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**Press Conference**  
**Berlin, May 19, 2008**  
**Ambassador William R. Timken, Jr.**

*As prepared for delivery.*

I would like to thank the Dresdner Bank for hosting this press conference. Our new neighbors on Pariser Platz have been very hospitable and accommodating during the construction phase of our new Embassy. We look forward to reciprocating.

At the end of this week, we will be moving into the building, in preparation for the Grand Opening which this year will be combined with the Embassy's annual Independence Day reception on the 4th of July. On Independence Day, Americans celebrate freedom and democracy, both at home and around the world. For many years, America stood at arms here in Berlin and elsewhere in Germany to protect freedom in this country.

It was a pillar of America's foreign policy. This year, as we return to the site of where the old American Embassy once stood, damaged by war and demolished to make way for a Wall that divided a city, a country and a continent, there is no better occasion to celebrate the triumph of those values.

We are honored that Chancellor Angela Merkel and former President George H. W. Bush will join us on this special occasion. I myself have often heard the Chancellor describe her involvement in the first democratic elections in the GDR in March 1990 and then, a few months later in December of that same year, in the first elections in a reunified Germany.

I have also heard, both from former President Bush and from others who were involved in the Two-Plus-Four negotiations and the developments that led up to the fall of the Berlin Wall, of America's insistence on the importance of German sovereignty. The United States wanted Germany to be a strong democratic partner in building a new Europe and a new transatlantic relationship. That vision is now a reality.

A group of Airlift pilots, including Col. Gail Halvorsen, will also participate in the Embassy's opening ceremony on July 4 as a tribute to

the 60th anniversary of the Berlin Airlift. Back in 1948, those pilots were most certainly all too familiar with the original Embassy, the Bluecher Palace, as it stood in ruins beside the Brandenburg Gate. I can imagine how moving the Grand Opening of our new Embassy on the same site will be for those pilots. Their sacrifice has come full circle.

Music and entertainment will be provided on the 4th by the Berlin Konzerthaus Orchestra, the U.S. Air Force Jazz Band, and Stars in Concert. I have been very gratified by the many generous offers of sponsorship. I am confident that this special 4th of July program will suitably celebrate this important occasion. In keeping with Independence Day traditions, a public fireworks display will close the program on the evening of the 4th.

The fireworks are also the kickoff for the Amerikafest that the Federation of German-American Clubs is hosting on July 5 on Pariser Platz and around the Brandenburg Gate. We are very proud that the Federation has chosen to share their own 60th anniversary celebration with the Grand Opening of the new Embassy. The Federation was established 60 years ago on the same day that the Airlift began. Over the past 60 years, the Federation has been a cornerstone of German-American friendship. The clubs have sponsored countless exchanges and nurtured numerous partnerships of lasting value. Federation president Annette Thor is with us here today to brief you on the events planned for July 5. I would like to thank her and all the members of the clubs around Germany for the role they play in German-American partnership.

Our new Embassy is the symbol of that partnership in the 21st century and the future; but it is also a living monument to the past. It was in that spirit that the building was designed by Moore Ruble Yudell, the winners of the first U.S. State Department architectural competition in decades. Architect John Ruble is with us today to describe that process. The job he shared with his colleagues was to design a building that was completely integrated into the new heart of Berlin, while maintaining the principles and standards of American diplomacy. They have done just that.

These are very exciting days for the staff of the Embassy. Again we thank our very good friends in Berlin and around Germany for their support.

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